

The world has united behind this urgent cause, and the United States is taking a leading role. We're working with other governments, relief organizations, and the United Nations to coordinate a swift and effective international response. We are rushing food, medicine, and other vital supplies to the region. And we are focusing efforts on helping the women and children who need special attention, including protection from the evil of human trafficking.

This past week, I sent a delegation led by Secretary of State Colin Powell and Governor Jeb Bush of Florida to the Indian Ocean region. They surveyed the damage in several countries, met with local and regional leaders, assessed the relief efforts in place, and began to evaluate what more can be done to help. Secretary Powell reported that American relief efforts are making major visible progress.

We have made an initial commitment of \$350 million in aid. And those funds are being distributed promptly to organizations on the ground. Navy vessels, including the U.S.S. *Abraham Lincoln*, have moved into the region to help provide food, medical supplies, and clean water. Helicopters and other military aircraft are meeting critical needs by airlifting supplies directly to victims in remote areas. As in so many other places, our service men and women are showing the courage and compassion of our Nation to the world.

We're also seeing the good heart of America in an outpouring of generosity here at home. Private citizens are showing their compassion in creative and inspiring ways. On a rainy day in Washington State, children sold hot chocolate by the side of the road and gave their profits to charity. Seven professional basketball players pledged to donate \$1,000 to UNICEF for every point they scored in a game. American businesses have contributed cash and products, and many are matching donations by their employees. Churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, and other religious congregations are taking up special collections for disaster victims.

To draw even greater amounts of private donations, I asked former Presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush to lead a nationwide charitable fundraising drive. Their mis-

sion is to encourage contributions, both large and small, directly to the organizations with recovery efforts underway in the disaster area.

I am grateful to the courageous relief groups that have responded so quickly to this catastrophe, including the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Salvation Army, Catholic Relief Services, Save the Children, CARE, AmeriCares, and many others. Many of these organizations have long experience with natural disasters and in-depth knowledge of the recovery needs. They're in the best position to use donations wisely and effectively.

To encourage support for these groups, I have signed legislation allowing Americans to deduct from their 2004 Federal income tax cash contributions made to tsunami relief efforts this month. I urge all Americans to contribute as they are able. More information about making a donation is available on the Internet at www.usafreedomcorps.gov.

In this time of grief for so many around the world, Americans have come together to pray for the victims and families of the tsunami disaster. We think especially of the children who have been lost and the survivors searching for their families. And we offer our sustained compassion and generosity as the people of the devastated region begin to rebuild.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on January 7 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 7 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Palestinian Presidential Election

January 9, 2005

I am heartened by today's strong turnout in the Palestinian elections. Palestinians throughout the West Bank and Gaza took a key step toward building a democratic future by choosing a new President in elections that observers describe as largely free and fair.

This is a historic day for the Palestinian people and for the people of the Middle East.

America and all free nations strongly support the efforts of the Palestinian people to create lasting democratic institutions. These efforts—including today's Presidential elections and the parliamentary elections that will follow in several months—are essential for the establishment of a sovereign, independent, viable, democratic, and peaceful Palestinian state that can live alongside a safe and secure Israel. These elections are further proof that, when given a choice, all peoples seek to live in liberty and to choose their own government.

The United States stands ready to help the Palestinian people realize their aspirations. The new Palestinian President and his cabinet face critical tasks ahead, including fighting terrorism, combating corruption, building reformed and democratic institutions, and reviving the Palestinian economy. We look forward to working with him and the Palestinian people to address these challenges and to advance the cause of Middle East peace consistent with the vision I set forth on June 24, 2002, of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Other countries also have constructive and vital roles to play. Israel must help to improve the humanitarian and economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza and follow through with the Disengagement Plan. The Arab states must take concrete steps with all parties to create a regional environment conducive to peace, lend financial support to the Palestinian people, and refuse to assist or harbor terrorists. The United States is looking carefully at how we can best organize and fund our own efforts to help the parties achieve a lasting peace.

Statement on the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Comprehensive Peace Agreement
January 9, 2005

I congratulate the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement. I thank all the officials of

the United States Government who have worked hard to help achieve this agreement, including Secretary of State Colin Powell, former Special Envoy for Sudan, Ambassador John Danforth, and the Special Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios. I also thank the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which sponsored the talks, and the Government of Kenya, which hosted them, and the Governments of Norway and the United Kingdom and the African Union, which played constructive roles for peace.

Both sides should be proud of this accomplishment. The difficult work of implementation must now begin. Only the implementation of this agreement in good faith can result in long-term peace and development.

As we celebrate this positive movement toward peace in the longstanding North-South conflict, we remember the conflict in Darfur and the suffering it causes. This comprehensive peace agreement should serve as an inspiration and model for both sides in their work toward negotiating a peaceful resolution of the Darfur conflict. I call on the Government of Sudan and on all Darfur rebel groups to live up to their cease-fire commitments, to end atrocities, and to allow the free movement of humanitarian workers and supplies. The United States will continue to assist the people of Darfur in reaching a just and lasting peace.

Remarks Following a Briefing on Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunamis Disaster Relief and an Exchange With Reporters

January 10, 2005

The President. Mr. Secretary, welcome back. I want to thank Secretary Powell and Andrew Natsios and Mike Brown and Marc Grossman for taking the lead on behalf of our Government and the American people and providing relief for the victims of the tsunamis.

The Secretary has given me a extensive briefing on what he has seen, on the unbelievable damage, particularly in Banda Aceh.